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Disabilities: Redefined

“Reassigning Meaning” by Simi Linton is an essay in which the definition of disability are reevaluated in a framework distinct from a medical model. Definitions of disabilities strongly impact the social perspective on how to best identify and support the disabled community. The social context in which disabled people live is profoundly impacted by the labels. Some labels used throughout the years are very derogatory which causes a stigma and results in isolation from society. The stigma associated with the label diminishes the capacity for independence and autonomy in the group of people that are defined as disabled. Defining a disability within the medical model implies the disability is only a personal hindrance, while defining it in the sociopolitical way could shift the perspective so that it becomes society’s challenge as well. To redefine disability is an effort to integrate people with different disabilities into society as a distinct but equal group. People impose their viewpoints resulting in a distorted expectation of society with regards to the disabled community. Leaving people with disabilities to live to the expectations that society imposes on them, when indeed society is the one hindering them. Society’s viewpoint of the meaning of the word disability needs to be reassessed in a way that allows people with disabilities to function optimally. To support growth through recognition of the matter disability belongs in a political category, giving the disabled community more power to inform others of these issues. The purpose of this essay is to enlighten and provoke a discussion in order to bring about change for the disabled community. Getting society to consider the impact of labels and expectations would enhance the growth and capacity of the disabled population.